

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 04597 061626Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRETORIA 4597

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: SAG PUTS PRESS ON NOTICE

REF: PRETORIA A-143, B) CAPE TOWN A-34 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PM VORSTER AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE SAG WILL NOT HESITATE TO ACT AGAINST ANY NEWSPAPERS THEY FEEL ARE STEPPING OVER LIMITS OF ILL-DEFINED, INFORMAL CENSORSHIP CODE. BOTH SINGLED OUT WORLD EDITOR PERCY QOBOZA FOR ATTACK. END SUMMARY.

2. PM VORSTER, DURING ADDRESS TO NATAL NATIONALIST PARTY CONGRESS ON AUGUST 31 SAID THAT THE SAG WAS KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON THE PRESS AND PREPARING A DOSSIER WHICH WOULD BE PRESENTED TO THE NEWSPAPER PRESS UNION WHEN THEY REVIEWED THE DECISION ON THE NEWSPAPER BILL NEXT YEAR (REF B). VORSTER SAID THAT HE BELIEVED IN FREEDOM OF THE PRESS BUT THAT IT MUST "GET ITS HOUSE IN ORDER". HE SAID THAT CERTAIN EDITORS
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 04597 061626Z

FELT THE SAG WAS AFRAID TO INTRODUCE THE NEWSPAPER BILL. "WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE THE PRESS A CHANCE TO DISCIPLINE ITSELF", VORSTER SAID, "BUT IF THEY DON'T THE LEGISLATION IS THERE... AND WILL BE PLACED BEFORE PARLIAMENT."

3. IN ANOTHER REFERENCE, VORSTER SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED "LIBERAL NEWSPAPERS" AND WORLD EDITOR PERCY QOBOZA. VORSTER

READ FROM A QOBOZA EDITORIAL CALLING FOR MAJORITY RULE AND REPLIED BY SAYING "WE HAVE WORKED FOR THE PRIVILEGES WE ENJOY. THIS (MAJORITY RULE) IS A DEMAND THAT WE REJECT ENTIRELY". HE THEN REITERATED THAT BLACKS WILL EXERCISE POLITICAL RIGHTS IN THEIR HOMELANDS.

4. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CITIZEN PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 1, MINISTER OF JUSTICE JIMMY KRUGER ALSO WARNED THE PRESS IN GENERAL AND QOBOZA INDIVIDUALLY. KRUGER, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, ASSERTED "I UNQUALIFIEDLY ADHERE TO A CONCEPT OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS UNRESTRAINED BY GOVERNMENT ACTION WHERE POSSIBLE, SUBJECT TO ITS OWN ETHICAL CODE....BUT IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THE NATIONAL SECURITY DEMANDS SPECIAL MEASURES, I HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA TO SEE THAT LAW AND ORDER IS MAINTAINED AND IF ANY NEWSPAPER TRANSGRESSES TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT LAW AND ORDER CANNOT BE MAINTAINED UNLESS SUCH A NEWSPAPER IS STOPPED, I SHALL STOP IT IMMEDIATELY. AND THIS ISN'T A THREAT, THIS IS A PROMISE." ON QOBOZA, KRUGER NOTED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO HIM ABOUT HIS "INFLAMMATORY MATERIAL" DURING RECENT UNREST AND "BROUGHT TO HIS NOTICE" THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT OF 1950 WHICH ALLOWS THE SAG TO CLOSE A NEWSPAPER THAT CAUSES "BAD FEELINGS AMONG RACES OR DOES ANYTHING THAT ADVERSELY AFFECTS LAW AND ORDER OR THE SECURITY OF THE STATE". KRUGER NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT "HAD A SINGLE WORD OF THANKS FOR MY FRIENDLY APPROACH". QOBOZA, HE SAID, HAD IN FACT CONTINUED TO CRITICIZE THE SAG. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PRETOR 04597 061626Z

KRUGER THEN READ THE SAME QUOTE THAT VORSTER HAD USED IN NATAL NP CONGRESS AND COMMENTED THAT "THIS MEANS REVOLUTION." HE ACCUSED QOBOZA OF INCITING SOWETO RESIDENTS TO RIOT.

5. COMMENT: THESE STATEMENTS ARE PART OF A SERIES OF VERBAL ATTACKS ON QOBOZA BY KRUGER OVER LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, MOSTLY TO DO WITH QOBOZA'S ROLE BEHIND FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN (REF A). RECENTLY, KRUGER AND VORSTER SEPARATELY CALLED QOBOZA IN FOR PERSONAL WARNINGS ON THE SUBJECT.

6. THE WORLD HAS BECOME ANETHEMA TO THE SAG AS QOBOZA HAS GROWN BOLDLY CRITICAL SINCE REASSUMING ITS EDITORSHIP FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM A NIEMAN FELLOWSHIP LAST YEAR. QOBOZA FOLLOWS A HIGHLY INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL LINE REJECTING COMPLETELY NP POLICY AND URGING MAJORITY RULE. QOBOZA AND RAND DAILY MAIL EDITOR ALLISTAIR SPARKS' RECENT CALL FOR A MULTIRACIAL NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION (JOHANNESBURG 2321) MAY ALSO HAVE IRRITATED THE SAG. THE SAG FACES A DILEMMA DEALING WITH QOBOZA BECAUSE HE IS WELL-KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY, AND SOUTH AFRICA'S SELF-ACCLAIMED IMAGE AS THE ONLY STATE IN AFRICA WITH REAL FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS IMPORTANT TO IT. KRUGER AND VORSTER, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE INCREASINGLY

IMPATIENT WITH THE UPSTART QOBOZA AND THE LIBERAL ENGLISH
PRESS.
BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

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